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THE
SONG OF THE BELL



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DOBELL COLLECTION

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THE
SONG OF THE BELL.

BY SCHILLER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.



PRIVATELY PRINTED.

1873.

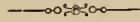
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The Song of the Bell.



Deep embedded in the earth
 The clay burnt mould is set,
 To-day the Bell must have its birth—
 Comrades to the work well met !

From your foreheads, perspiration
 Must in streams unstinted flow :
 Earn the master's approbation—
 The blessing comes not from below !

Earnest words, and good discourse
 Beseem the work we have on hand ;
 Labour best pursues its course,
 When sage converse cheers the band.

So, gravely friends, consider now
 The ills that from weak counsels flow ;
 Worthless the man that ponders not
 The cares and duties of his lot !

The powers of man's intelligence,
 His reason, and his soul, were given,
 That he might yield his mind and sense
 To the pursuits imposed by Heav'n.

Take the logs of pinewood dry,
 Pile them up, and pile them high,
 That the flame confined
 May the opening find—
 To the molten mass,
 Cast the ingots in
 That the copper and the tin,
 May in due proportion pass.—

The bell, that with the help of fire
 We fashion in the mould,
 Shall in the belfry's height aspire
 To counsel young and old.

To many an age 'twill tell its tale,
 'Twill strike the ears of many a mortal,
 'Twill sadly with the afflicted wail,
 And to devotion ope the portal.

The changing scenes of life below,
 Its incidents of joy or woe,
 The sounding metal loud shall ring
 And far and wide the message wing.

See white flames are rising high,
 Showing that the mixture flows !
 Haste, wood ashes to supply,
 So, the liquid smoother goes.
 Free from scum the stream should be,
 That the clangor full and free,
 May ring out melodiously.

Now with welcome loud and deep,
 The new-born babe it ushers in,
 Entering in the arms of sleep
 On this world of pain and sin.
 For it, as yet, life's joys and woes
 In the womb of time repose—
 A mother's love, of heaven born,
 Watches o'er life's early morn—
 The seasons, swift as arrow, glide,
 The youth soon quits the young girl's side,
 And on life's journey thro' the land,
 Forth he goes with staff in hand—
 A stranger, to his home returns,
 And in joyous manhood's pride,
 He seeks with cheek that blushing burns
 The blooming maiden at his side.
 A nameless longing fills his heart,
 And tears bedew his eyes,

He wanders forth—alone—apart
 And from his comrades flies.

He tracks her steps, where'er she goes,
 Enraptured when they meet,
 And culls the loveliest flower that blows,
 To cast it at her feet.

Oh fond delight—delicious hope—
 Of first love's golden day,
 The eye beholds the heavens ope,
 The heart seems steeped in bliss for aye.

The tubes are browning—see I thrust
 This little rod beneath the crust—
 When we see it glisten,
 Listen, comrades, listen !
 The casting time is come—
 Prove the metal, watch the scum—
 See if hard, with soft, combines
 For the work, with goodly signs.

When weak and strong united meet,
 Harmonious is the song,
 Let those who bind themselves for aye,
 With prudent care essay,
 If heart to heart, responsive beat—
 Fancy is brief, repentance long !

In the bridal tresses bright,
 Shines the marriage garland's sheen,
 When the merry peals invite,
 To the gay and festive scene.
 Alas! with virgin love's May-day,
 Fades life's brightest dream away.
 With the veil and with the zone,
 Is the lovely vision flown.
 Passion must pass away,
 Love must for ever stay—
 The flower must die, the fruit must grow—
 Forth into life the man must go—
 He must work, and must strive,
 Must plan, and contrive,
 He must risk, and must snatch,
 Good fortune to catch—
 Thus only, possessions grow,
 Granaries overflow,
 Houses more spacious show—
 In them, the housewife rules,
 As mother, the children schools—
 So wise is her reign
 In the household domain!
 The maidens she teaches,
 To the young lads, she preaches,
 And ceaseless she drives
 The men and the wives,

She increases the gains
 With her orderly pains,
 The stores without measure
 She heaps up with treasure,
 The spindle she plies,
 Whirring swift as it flies,
 Of linen of snow, and glittering wool,
 That the presses and chests, of the best, shall be full.

She is careful and clever,

And rests herself—never !

And the good man in pride
 From his gable, below,
 Looks out far and wide,
 Where the trellised vines grow,
 And the barns overflowing
 Rich blessings bestowing.

Like waves on the ocean

His corn, zephyrs kiss,

And his heart, with emotion,

Boasts loud of his bliss.

So full is his cup

That his house seems set up

As firm as a rock,

'Gainst adversity's shock—

But alas ! with prosperity

None can make bond,

Swift cometh adversity,
Looming beyond !

The casting, now, may be begun,
The metal mixes fair,
Yet before we let it run—
Pray we an earnest prayer—

Draw the spigot out !
God the household save !
Smoking from the spout
Shoots the fiery wave !

Fire is a blessing true,
Controlled and used aright,
For mortals' grandest works are due
To its heaven-gifted might—

Yet fearful, when in luckless hour
It bursts its shackles, is that power,
And rushes on its headlong course,
Nature's child in native force !
And woe, when unrestrained and free
The flames rush on increasingly,
Mad, without remorse or pity,
Carceering through the crowded city,
When the elements conspire,
With the wild devouring fire.

From the clouds,
 Whose veil enshrouds,
 Blessing comes at last!
 The rain down pours,
 The tempest roars,
 The bolts from heaven are cast—
 Hark how the storm mutters,
 High from the tower—
 Blood red the heaven—
 The bright light that flutters—
 Is not day's power—
 The earth and the heaven
 With turmoil are riven—
 The vapour upcurls,
 The lurid flame whirls—
 Thro' the long winding street,
 The wind fans the heat—
 Like oven's mouth racking,
 Rafters crashing, windows cracking,
 Children screaming, mothers crying—
 Beasts beneath the ruins lying,
 Groaning, struggling desperately,
 Burst their bonds and set them free—
 The darksome night
 Is mid-day bright—
 From hand, to hand, the buckets fly,
 And jets of water mount on high,

Howling comes the stormy wind—
 The bristling flame speeds fast behind
 Crackling in the garner's dry,
 It seeks the faggots piled on high,
 And as tho' in its mad flight
 T'would bear away earth's stored up might,
 It swells to giant height.—

Man beneath God's judgment quails,
 And the dire disaster wails !

Charred and gutted is the pile,
 Destroying angels fitting bed,
 In the vacant casement, while
 Horror rears her ghastly head,
 And within the empty space
 Sky and air alone have place.

On the grave of his belongings
 One last look the good man sends,
 Then despite his spirit's longings
 Staff in hand, his way he wends—
 'Mid the direful conflagration
 Still remains one consolation,
 Of the loved ones in his hall
 None is wanting to his call !

The stream is forth, the mould is full,
 So far is the task propitious,

Pray the metal softly cool,
 And our skill and toil enrich us—
 Should the torrent stray,
 Should the mould give way !—
 Alas ! how oft when hope beguiles,
 Disaster lurks beneath her smiles !

In earth's prolific womb we lay
 Our hopes of growing store,
 The sower strews his seed in clay,
 Trusting in heaven to gather more—
 Weeping, a costlier seed we lay
 In earth's dark lap of kindred clay,
 And hope from out the dreary tomb
 Immortal flowers shall rise and bloom !

From the steeple, hark the bell,
 Deep and earnest, sounds the knell—
 That solemn toll
 A parting soul
 Ushers on the untrodden road
 Leading to its last abode !

Forth the deadly arrow flew—
 Spouse beloved, and mother true—
 Ah ! the shaft was aimed—at you !
 See the King of Terrors tear

The victim from the husband's arms,
 From the loved ones whom she bare,
 Memorials of her early charms
 Whom she watched with mother's zest,
 Growing on her anxious breast—
 Since, alas, the watchful mother
 Guards no more the sacred hearth,
 That, supplanted by another,
 She must tread a Spirit's path,
 The household bond is rent for ever,
 To be re-united—never !

Rest we while the bell is cooling
 Like the birds disporting free,
 Joyous all in bush and tree.
 As at vesper, from their schooling
 Boys by starlight shout with glee,
 While the master, never free,
 Ever watches anxiously !

In the forest's darkling glade
 Deepens fast the evening shade,
 As the wand'rer wends his way
 To his home at close of day—
 Bleating flocks and lowing kine,
 Tread the roads in lengthened line,
 To the accustomed fold and stall
 Sheep, and oxen, hasten all

Waggons groan beneath the weight
 Of the harvest's golden freight—
 On the topmost sheaf of all
 Rests the flow'ry coronal,
 And the reapers to the dance,
 Youth and maid, in bands advance—
 Street and market, now are still,

The city gates with pondrous jar,
 Close, while lighted chambers fill

With citizens and guests from far—
 Earth herself in sable decks,
 Naught of night the burgher recks,
 For him the eye of justice wakes,
 The bad alone, in darkness quakes.

Holy order, blessing rife !
 Heaven's fair daughter, foe to strife!
 Which can men, with fetters light,
 In harmonious bond unite—
 Only safe, and sure, foundation
 For the building of a nation,
 Which, the savage erst beguiled
 From his desert and his wild,
 And in human dwelling placed
 Which, for him, with gentle hand,
 Fondly wove, and interlaced,
 The sacred bond of fatherland.

One common yoke of union binds
 Thousands of active hands and minds—
 The master, and the servant, too,
 Alike, the ends of life pursue,
 'Neath freedom's sacred banner,
 Each to their several interests true,
 Each in their several manner.
 The subject's craft is his renown,
 His toil-devoted hours—
 The monarch's honour is his crown,
 Our handiwork is ours—

Oh! holy concord—blessed Peace!
 To guard our city never cease,
 Nor ever dawn the dreadful hour
 When war its savage hordes shall pour
 Adown this peaceful vale, which now,
 Blushes with the sunset glow,
 And the lurid sky shall lower
 With smoke and flame from wall and tower!

 Now break the mould—its task is done—
 Now feast our hearts and eyes,
 Upon the work, whose course is run,
 With joy and glad surprise—
 Swing the hammer, swing!
 Till the metal ring,

Till its grasp the clay releases,
 Ere it sees the light—the bell
 Must break its brittle shell,
 And its covering, fall to pieces.

At fitting time, the master may
 Fearless, destroy the crust of clay,
 But woe, when the glowing ore
 Finds for itself a door,
 And rushes forth with thunder's roar—
 As from hell's wide jaws outpouring
 Tongues of flame to heaven upsoaring—
 When force, unbridled, holds command
 No edifice can hope to stand,
 And when, against the powers that be,
 The masses rise tumultuously,
 No Commonwealth can prosperous be—
 Woe, when disaffection reigns,
 In the bosom of the State,
 When the people burst their chains,
 And in deadly wrath and hate,
 In luckless hour —
 Seize the power—
 And sound the note of war
 With harsh and hideous jar
 Upon the mellow bell, but late
 To peace and concord dedicate—

"Freedom and equality"—
 Howling comes the cry—
 The burghers rush to arms,
 The street with people swarms—
 The slums let loose their horde
 And murder stalks abroad.
 Women, like hyænas laughing,
 Grim, at scenes of direst woe,
 Panther-like, the heart's blood quaffing
 Of the dead and mangled foe—
 Naught is sacred, hence for ever,
 The bonds of sanctity must sever.
 Good gives place to evil—vice
 Reigns, like hell, in paradise.—
 Fearful is the tiger's spring,
 The lion's open portal,
 But of all the deadliest thing
 Is the rage of angry mortal!—
 Alas! the lovers of their kind,
 Who prematurely haste to find
 Light and instruction for the blind,
 But dazzle only, and o'erwhelm,
 In fire and ashes town and realm!—

Heaven the work has sped—
 Like a golden star
 Shining from afar,

The husk, the nut has shed—
 From crown to rim it gleams
 Like the sun's bright beams.
 While the arms on the blazoned shield,
 Just honor to the master yield !
 Hither, hither, come to call,
 Close the circle, comrades all !
 While we consecrate the Bell—
 Let its name " Concordia " be,
 So, to the neighbours shall it tell
 Its tale of peace and harmony !

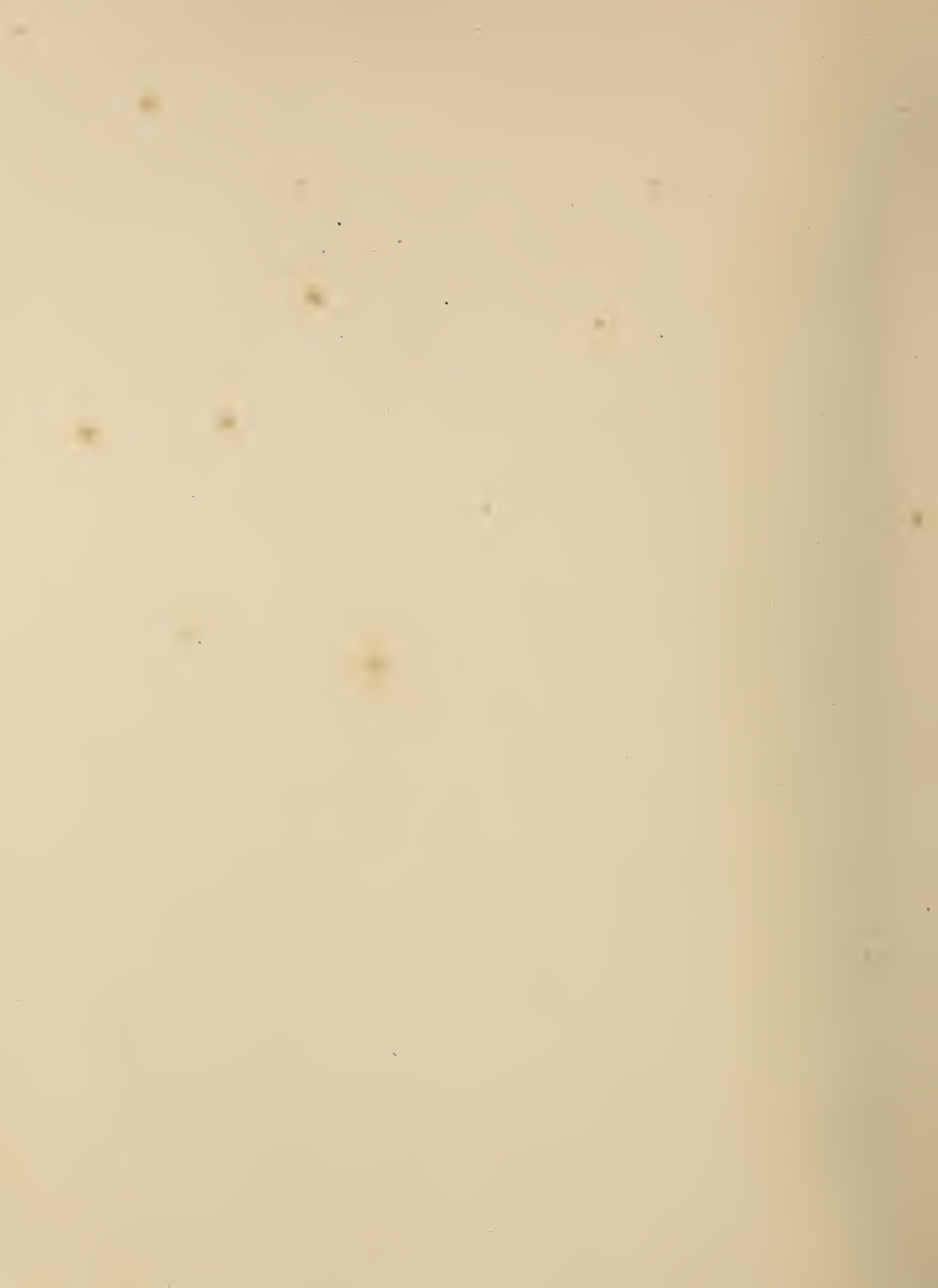
And this shall be its proud vocation,
 The master's fondest aspiration,
 High above this nether sphere,
 In heaven's blue vault, so still and clear,
 With voice as solemn, deep and loud
 As issues from the thunder-cloud,
 The great Creator's praise to sound ;
 And as the year rolls swiftly round,
 Echo the music of the stars,
 Revolving on their glittering cars—
 Its brazen voice we dedicate,
 To register decrees of fate,
 And hourly with its tuneful chime
 To mark the rapid flight of time—

Itself, unknowing sympathy,
 Shall speak the voice of destiny,
 Shall note the course of human life,
 Of change and trouble ever rife,
 And as its deep tones on the ear,
 Vibrate with feelings kin to fear,
 Let each his lesson learn—on earth
 That all is transient—grief and mirth,
 And death as certain as our birth !

Now the ropes with vigour ply,
 See, it moves—it mounts on high,
 To the realms of sound !
 Heaven on us its blessings send,
 Happiness our State attend,
 Joy and peace abound !

SCHILLER.







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